

## **Research misconduct: does self-policing work?**

**Ben R. Martin (SPRU – Science and Technology Policy Research, University of Sussex)**

**B.Martin@sussex.ac.uk**

### **Abstract**

Is research misconduct a significant problem? Progress in science depends crucially on our ability to trust that the authors of research publications have not falsified or fabricated their data, nor have they stolen their ideas from others to present them as their own. It has been widely assumed up to now that such research misconduct is rare, generally low level and self-correcting, with any more serious misconduct being quickly detected by peer review and stopped. In short, it is believed that self-policing works in keeping the academic community honest, and in ensuring that a life of 'crime' does not pay. However, a case of plagiarism recently investigated by the Editors of *Research Policy* forces us to re-examine these comfortable assumptions. A suspect paper proved to be the tip of a very much larger 'iceberg', leading to the exposure of one of the greatest plagiarists of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. For 30 years, he appears to have found ways of circumventing the self-policing mechanisms designed to keep research misconduct at bay. This presentation describes the case and the lessons we can draw from it.